

How I, Brandon E, a non-Blizzard employee with no solid evidence to the dealings of Blizzard or Activision, believe the 3rd season of the Overwatch League will do the act of localization.

Now, on the outset, I want to be clear: Overwatch League, as much as we wish it was, is NOT YET mainstream. OWL does not have the capacity to run the league similar to how the NBA runs its league, with games everyday of the week across the league and flying almost everyday to a new location to play a game. OWL does not have the infrastructure to do such a thing. Flying the crew necessary to run a giant operation like this is too expensive, especially when you take into account the need for the various non-english broadcasts of the matches, visa's and passports to each nation for every player, coach, broadcaster, and tech personnel, and the equipment itself. It was floated that there would need to be 10 sets of broadcasters to host the games. That isn't possible, and more importantly, not cost effective. Remember, this is a BUSINESS, not a labor of love to the fans.

Or, just think of the players: Imagine a team having to travel from London to China in 2 days to have a match. It isn't possible in a realistic fashion. We would want to watch these teams at the peak of their playing ability. A sleep deprived London Spitfire against the Chengdu Hunters is not what I would spend my time watching. Yes, the NBA does road trips where a team will go into the opposing conference and play 5-8 games on the road, but OWL works differently. The team is only at max 12 players, with much more equipment needed than just a ball, enough space to have a full sized court, and refs.[\(LINK\)](#) It is also a setup that is not as simple as what we see in the NBA. The court is a set size surrounded by seats. Each arena will have multiple uses within the season and between games. Setting up an arena and breaking it down is much harder for an esports event than an NBA or NHL game. [\(LINK\)](#)

What I feel is the most logical solution for this problem is to do what I will lay out within this essay.

First off, I need to set some groundwork:

I am going to work under the assumption that:

- the league will stay at 20 teams in season 3.
- That the league will maintain a set format of a 5 week stage, 4 stage season, with a stage playoffs at the end of each stage.
- That the Blizzard Arena will be the location of the stage playoffs & All-Star Weekend.

Why do I make these assumptions?

- Many of the expansion teams fill holes when looking at the league, not from a divisional split, but from a geographical split. 4 regions, with 5 teams each(roughly).
- Due to the way Overwatch is updated, it would make sense to keep the setup of the season the same.
- The Blizzard Arena was just updated, as well as it would make sense since the building is within the company's use already.

With that stated, this is my personal theory on what will happen in Season 3.

The league will split from being 2 divisions into 4, making each division 5 teams. This will be public knowledge.

These divisions will be as follows:

- Pacific West (China & Korea)
 - Charge
 - Spark
 - Dragons
 - Hunters
 - Dynasty

- Pacific East (NA West Coast)
 - Titans
 - Shock
 - Valiant
 - Gladiators
 - Fuel

- Atlantic South (US South)
 - Mayhem
 - Reign
 - Outlaws
 - Justice
 - Fusion

- Atlantic North (US Northeast, Toronto, & Europe)
 - Defiant
 - NYXL
 - Uprising
 - Spitfire
 - Eternal

Each stage will have 8 games per team. The season overall will be: 1 game against opposing region (Pacific vs. Atlantic)(10), 2 games against same region but different division (Atlantic South vs. Atlantic North)(10), 3 games against same division (Atlantic North vs. Atlantic North)(12). $10 + 10 + 12 = 32$ games.

How the league will do localization more specifically is 2 fold:

1st part will be having home games within all of the cities within the league. These will be what we will see later this season in Dallas & Atlanta.

2nd part will be what we have already been seeing with each team, watch parties. These are already a staple of multiple teams, I went to my team's watch party in Miami last year for the Grand Finals.

How the league will achieve these 2 areas will be based on how home games will be run, as well as give more time off for the teams overall. Travelling is a big hindrance for anyone, and time away from the road can do a lot for mental health of the team. For season 2 of OWL, teams have either 2 or 3 weeks off throughout the season, not including the weeks between stages, and the regional Home games in Season 2 are to cater to each of the various regions within the US. Atlanta for the South, Dallas for the Central US, LA for Asian Markets, and if the go to NYC again for the Grand Finals, it will serve the Northeast and Europe since many flights from Europe go into NYC.

The League, I believe, will be having 4 teams each week host home games within each stage. 1 team will be from each region. (ex, Atlanta for Atlantic South; Toronto for Atlantic North; San Francisco for Pacific East; Seoul for Pacific West). Each home team will play when they are hosting, and will have 3 other teams with them. (Atlanta would host NYXL, Gladiators, and Vancouver). Those 4 teams will play 2 games over the week, either on Thu. & Sat, or Fri. & Sun. The host city will have 4 games in total (NYXL vs. Vancouver, Gladiators vs. Atlanta on Thu/Fri; NYXL vs. Gladiators, Vancouver vs. Atlanta on Sat/Sun). This would allow for each team to have a day between each game, and allow time for the teams to prepare for their next game.

With the broadcast, it would be scheduled so that 1 host city will hand off the broadcast to one of the other cities hosting that weekend (Atlanta hands off the broadcast to San Francisco after their two matches conclude.) With coordinating match days between the 4 hosting cities (Atlanta and San Francisco host on Thursday & Saturday, Toronto and Seoul for Friday & Sunday), you would have a broadcast that has 4 teams hosting games with a total of 16 matches, on par with what we have right now. Yes the workload would be a bit more for each team, but it wouldn't be much different from right now. The only reason that the league is 28 games is because 4 weeks of the league in Season 2 are only 8 games in that week rather than 16. While some players may complain about the added work, imagine the scenario where a team does 3 weeks of games, their 1 week of home games, and on week 5 of the stage they get a bye. They miss the stage playoffs, and get the 1 week bye between the stages. In that scenario, the team would get 3 weeks off from playing on stage to recoup, see family, do whatever is needed to do.

To address the added workload and travelling, one team per week per division would get a bye week. This would give each team 1 week off every stage. This week would be used, at the discretion of the organization, to hold a watch party of the matches of that week. At this watch party event, players would be able to meet fans and be able to connect with the local community, which will build the brand's connection with the city much faster. The amount of mandatory attendance would be up to the organizations and the players, maybe 2 or 3 players go home to their own country to see family or other personal matters; or the organization may not do anything at all.

This format, of watch parties and home games, will give opportune ability for the team to meet with fans multiple times a stage, while still being able to travel to games, while still keeping costs relatively low for the league overall.